

## DECISION MODELS

For fast decision-making in dynamic, high-pressure environments.

### 1. OODA LOOP (OBSERVE, ORIENT, DECIDE, ACT)



**Best for:** Fast, iterative decision-making in dynamic, high-pressure environments.

**Useful for situations where:**

- Situations unfold rapidly (e.g., traffic stops, pursuits, or high-risk encounters).
- You need to observe, orient quickly to changing conditions, and act decisively.
- Stay ahead of unfolding situations rather than just reacting.

**How it works in the field:**

1. Observe – Scan the environment.
2. Orient – Assess risk, use training & experience to understand intent.
3. Decide – Choose the best response based on available data.
4. Act – Execute the decision while remaining flexible to adapt as needed.

**Example:**

A trooper pulls over a vehicle and notices nervous behavior and a concealed weapon in the car. Instead of immediately reacting, they cycle through OODA:

- Observe (body language, behavior shifts).
- Orient (consider prior incidents, suspect demeanor, and legal context).
- Decide (approach carefully, call for backup).
- Act (communicate commands confidently, take control of the situation).

### 2. RECOGNITION-PRIMED DECISION (RPD) MODEL

**Best for:** Decisions under extreme time constraints with limited information.

**Useful for situations where:**

- You need to make split-second decisions based on experience rather than waiting for perfect information.

- You need to identify patterns and recognize familiar situations to predict outcomes.
- You need to reduce hesitation in life-threatening situations where action must be immediate.

**How it works in the field:**

1. Assess the situation and compare it to past experiences.
2. Recognize patterns (does this look like something I've seen before?).
3. Mentally simulate possible outcomes (if I do X, what will happen?).
4. Act based on the best match to prior knowledge.

**Example:**

A trooper approaches a stopped vehicle and instantly recognizes behaviors (e.g., furtive movements, excessive nervousness) similar to prior encounters with armed suspects. Instead of analyzing every detail, they act decisively by adjusting their approach, calling for backup, and maintaining tactical advantage.

**3. HEURISTIC-BASED DECISION MAKING**

**Best for: Quick, experience-driven decisions using mental shortcuts.**

**Useful for situations where:**

- No time for deep analysis—you need to rely on training, instincts, and mental shortcuts.
- You need to filter out unnecessary data to focus on immediate risks.

**Examples of heuristics:**

- "If it looks wrong, it probably is." (Pattern recognition)
- "When in doubt, create distance." (Officer safety priority)
- "Slow is smooth, smooth is fast." (Maintaining composure under pressure)

**Example:**

A trooper sees a vehicle weaving erratically on a highway. Instead of running through every possible cause (medical emergency, distraction, DUI, fatigue), they use heuristics to prioritize pulling the driver over safely before overanalyzing.

For decisions with more time, requiring consistency, such as customer service, handling uncertainty with policies, and situations without complete information.

## 1. RAPID MODEL (RECOMMEND, AGREE, PERFORM, INPUT, DECIDE)

**Best for:** Structured, policy-driven decisions that involve multiple roles (frontline agents, supervisors, compliance officers).

**Useful for situations where:**

- Many decisions require clear accountability (who can approve exceptions, escalate issues, or enforce policies).
- Need to avoid bottlenecks by defining who has the final say and who provides input.
- Need to ensure fairness and compliance with state regulations while allowing for customer service flexibility.

**How it works in the field:**

- Recommend – A frontline agent recommends an action (e.g., approving an ID renewal with missing documents).
- Agree – A supervisor agrees to an exception or requires additional verification.
- Perform – The final decision is executed based on policy.
- Input – Compliance officers provide insights if the case is unusual or escalated.
- Decide – The designated authority (e.g., manager) finalizes the decision when needed.

**Example:**

A customer is missing one required document for a Real ID application but has two alternative forms of ID. The agent recommends an exception, a supervisor reviews and agrees or denies, compliance provides input if needed, and a final decision is made based on state guidelines.

## 2. FIRST PRINCIPLES THINKING

**Best for:** Problem-solving and policy interpretation when standard answers don't apply.

**Useful for situations where:**

- Customer issues don't fit neatly into policy, requiring creative problem-solving.

- Employees need help to break problems down to the fundamental requirements rather than blindly following past procedures.
- Useful for modernizing outdated processes (e.g., making online renewals more efficient).

**How it works in the field:**

1. Identify core requirements – What must be true to approve this request?
2. Break down assumptions – Are we requiring something because it's always been done that way, or is it actually necessary?
3. Find a new solution – Can we meet legal requirements in a different way without unnecessary barriers?

**Example:**

An elderly customer can't provide a birth certificate but has several other identifying documents. Instead of immediately rejecting their application, an agent uses First Principles Thinking to determine if an alternative form of proof can satisfy legal requirements.

**3. DECISION TREES**

**Best for:** Consistently handling customer inquiries based on predefined rules.

**Useful for situations where:**

- Employees face repetitive but slightly varying situations (e.g., "What do I do if a customer's license is expired but they moved states?").
- A structured, flowchart-based approach is needed to ensure decisions are consistent, fair, and policy-compliant.
- Ambiguity needs to be reduced, so employees don't have to guess or escalate every decision.

**How it works in the field:**

- Employees follow a structured path based on customer responses.
- If an exception arises, they know when to escalate rather than making arbitrary decisions.

**Example:**

A customer applies for a name change but only has a marriage certificate (no court order). Instead of guessing, the agent follows a decision tree:

1. Does the marriage certificate match state requirements? → If yes, proceed.
2. If no, does the customer have another supporting document? → If yes, proceed.
3. If neither works → Escalate to a supervisor.